

JACK ANDERSON'S WASHINGTON LETTER  
Volume II, No. 22  
November 1985

ASK JACK ANDERSON

A subscriber here in Washington wonders about the real story surrounding the defection of a high-level KGB officer, who later claimed he was drugged and kidnapped by the CIA.

Strong doubts about Vitaly Yurchenko, who was hailed as the biggest coup for Western intelligence in years, existed among old hands at Langley from the very start. An intelligence source called me with his suspicions weeks before Yurchenko walked out of his safe-house quarters where he was being debriefed by the CIA. Behind closed doors at the CIA's headquarters -- as well as in the suburban bars where CIA people hang out after hours -- there was talk that Yurchenko was actually a double agent sent to plant disinformation in the West.

Suspensions were aroused by Yurchenko's debriefing report on another Soviet defector, navy officer Nicholas Shadrin, who sought asylum in the West in 1959 and disappeared without a trace 10 years ago after supposedly telling the CIA everything he knew. Yurchenko told his interrogators that Shadrin was killed by the KGB.

If true, that would seem to establish Shadrin's authenticity as a defector. But that's just the point: many CIA veterans think Shadrin was a double agent. His interpretations of Soviet naval policy in the 15 years after he began talking to the CIA were at odds with other intelligence sources, and his predictions were far off base.

Obviously, if Shadrin was in fact a double agent, there would have been no reason for the KGB to eliminate him as Yurchenko had claimed.